
The MCA Advisory

The Newsletter of Medal Collectors of America

Volume 11 Number 2

March 2008

Board Members

John W. Adams, President
John Sallay, Vice President
Barry D. Tayman, Treasurer
Vicken Yegparian, Secretary
David T. Alexander
Robert F. Fritsch
David Menchell
Scott Miller
Ira Rezak
Donald Scarinci
Michael Turrini
Benjamin Weiss

John W. Adams, Editor

99 High Street, 11th floor
Boston, MA 02110
john.adams@canaccordadams.com

Barry Tayman, Treasurer

3115 Nestling Pine Court
Ellicott City, MD 21042
bdtayman@verizon.net

Benjamin Weiss, Webmaster

benweiss.org@comcast.net

Website: medalcollectors.org

Editor of Collectors' Guide, Dick Johnson
(dick.johnson@snet.net)

Dues: \$20.00/Year \$35.00/2 years

From the Editor 2

Samuel C. Pennington

(by Q. David Bowers) 2

The Preble Medal (by Tony Lopez) 3

(Karl Moulton) 6

Letters to the Editor 7

What's New on Our Website!

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE EVERY MONTH

www.medalcollectors.org

From the Editor

It is a delightful coincidence that the Truxtun article in January should be followed in short order by an article on the Preble medal. These two awards commemorate a precarious period in the emergence of our young nation. To have superb articles on both medals causes our cup to run over. All kudos to Tony Lopez for his marvelous research.

Also in this issue, we welcome the contribution of our ink-stained fellow, Harry Salyards. Harry has been for many years the editor of Pennywise, the authoritative voice of copper collectors. Harry's editorial make this magazine "must" reading regardless of one's collecting interests.

Earlier this month, we visited Yale University to view an extensive collection (over 200 pieces) of Admiral Vernon medals. This collection was formed by none other than C. Wyllys Betts whose attribution system for Vernon Medals is still used by many modern collectors. A devoted admirer of Betts in all other respects, we have long thought that his editors somehow got his notes on the Vernon series confused, making a full concordance with other attribution systems effectively impossible. Our suspicion in this respect was confirmed by the visit: every piece in Betts' Collection translates into a McCormack – Goodhart number, with no new varieties to report. Those of you still using the Betts numbers for your collection need to get hold of a copy McCormack-Goodhart and join the 21st century.

From the President

Following the enthusiasm engendered by its creation, The Asylum has had difficulty attracting a regular flow of articles. In part, our function has been replaced by The E-Sylum which is more timely by definition and for which, given the informality, it is much easier to write.

However, it may also be that bibliophiles are less overtly enthusiastic than, for example, collectors of colonials, coppers and medals. The periodicals for these branches of numismatics are literally gushing with material. For all that bibliophiles may be more restrained or dignified, these traits do not justify our silence. After all, are we not better read and more articulate?

We enjoy a large membership that is constantly making new acquisitions and discovering new information. These vignettes need to be shared, not only to stoke our enthusiasm but also to confirm yours. We are blessed with a gifted editor who will be happy to critique any germs of an article that may sprout (as am I). If you don't have any ideas of your own shame on you but, then act as a bird dog pointing to someone else.

This issue includes a review of Syd Martin's simply superb work on the Hibernia coinage. We welcome your reviews of any book in which our membership should take interest.

Samuel C. Pennington, Publisher of
Maine Antique Digest, 1929-2008

Dear John,

These are some additional comments to go with the obituary of Sam Pennington.

Remembering Sam Pennington
(by Dave Bowers)

I don't recall when I first discovered *Maine Antique Digest*, but it was a long time ago. I had been a subscriber to *Antique and the Arts Weekly*, *Antiques* magazine, the *Antique Trader*, and other publications. Somehow or other I received a copy of the Pennington newspaper, surely of marginal interest at best, as Maine was just one of fifty states, and not necessarily a focal point for any specific specialty of mine. I was quite familiar with the

state of Maine, and had made a number of trips looking for antiques. Years ago, this was in the 1960s, the main street of Hallowell was virtually a town devoted to dealers in such things—one shop after another. (Today it has lost much of this character, although, notably, Frank Trask has a shop there selling coins and currency.)

How wrong my casual thought concerning *Maine Antique Digest* proved to be! Upon opening it, I found the most interesting, information-filled publication on antiques that I had ever read. While *Maine* was part of the title, I quickly realized that this was a *national* newspaper, with more coverage about New York City, New Orleans, Los Angeles, Chicago, and other auction and sales sites than any other periodical—and by far. Beyond that, the *M.A.D.* stable of columnists was superb—writers who were able to capture not only basic essential information, but the spirit of the occasion or event. And, when something nasty happened—a law suit, theft, or whatever, even involving major advertisers in *M.A.D.*, they were covered in depth with skilled journalism. No other publication came even close to doing that, years ago or today.

Over a long period of time I was an advertiser in *M.A.D.*, seeking things of interest to me, including numismatic items such as obsolete paper money, as well as posters, catalogues, and other items relating to early silent movies, arcade machines, and other things I have been inclined to collect.

If anything, Sam was *aware* of the world around him. Although he was not a numismatist, he paid attention to what was going on in the coin community. About twenty years ago, I believe it was, Sam telephoned to discuss a new project: an annual publication giving auction records in different areas of collectibles, including coins. We talked about this at some length, and he marveled that while prices into the hundreds of thousands of dollars were commonplace for coins, such were hardly ever heard of in prints, posters, mechanical

banks, and the like. This publication never came to be, but Sam kept in constant touch on other events and stories, as did one of his journalists, David Hewett.

More recently, Sam became interested in medals, focusing his purchase interests with my fine friend Joe Levine, of Presidential Coin & Antiques. Joe is, of course, a great authority on that subject, and his catalogues cumulatively stand as a record of many important collections and individual items. Some years back, my company partnered with Joe in the presentation of the David Dreyfuss Collection of presidential inaugural medals. A grand success for everyone involved. Sam sought to gain more information. After one particularly notable medal event at Stack's, he called for information, and I directed him to several sources, including Alan Weinberg, who had been at the sale, and ditto with Tony Terranova. Wasting no time, he contacted both. Later, Alan became a contributor to Sam's monthly column on medals in *M.A.D.*

In conversations, Sam would mention that he could not get over the idea that fine art medals, by distinguished sculptors such as Paulanship, Laura Gardin Fraser, Isador Konti, and others, could be purchased inexpensively, often \$100 to \$200, while statutes and other works by the same people were apt to cost tens of thousands of dollars or more, if they could be found at all. Sam enjoyed what all members of the Medal Collectors of America do: having a virtual art museum on hand in the form of medals. In particular, he was enthralled with the Society of Medalists issues and their inexpensive cost, as well as the more elaborately presented and earlier Circle of Friends of the Medallion series. Likely he gathered complete collections, not particularly difficult to do, even as you read these words.

Sam enjoyed what he did, savored the talents of his family and staff, kept an eye on the world of antiques around him, and enjoyed every aspect of *Maine Antique Digest*. His legacy lives on, and we are all the richer for it.

Sincerely,

Dave Bowers

Tony and John:

This is an absolutely fantastic article. This should serve as a model for every medal collector to analyze a medal from their collection by researching, digging, questioning and writing up this analysis. Tony has done a yeoman job in exactly that. We stretch our medallic knowledge by just such analysis that Tony has accomplished here. My hat is off to him! Great work! I am anxious to see it in print with all the illustrations.

Since Tony did not come up with a title I offer my suggestion. I also could not resist some additional editing, some last minute polishing. Attached is my edited version.

Dick

The Preble Medal (by Tony Lopez)

I recently began weighing and measuring my collection of US Military and Naval Historic medals, and was surprised to make an astounding discovery.

I have in my collection an 1804 dated Commodore Preble Naval medal, listed in Julian's *Medals of the United States Mint 1792-1892* and catalogued there as a Naval Medal NA-3. This beautiful and extraordinarily detailed medal was originally designed and struck as the Congressional Gold Medal awarded to Commodore Edward Preble. Intended to be awarded to Preble by an 1805 Resolution of the early United States Congress, the medal honored Preble's skill and bravery [DELETE demonstrated by Preble while commanding the American fleet] onboard the USS Constitution in the battle off Tripoli in 1804 while commanding the American fleet.

Preble's actions in commanding the US Marines against Tripoli during the Barbary Wars in the Mediterranean were not only significant enough to earn him a Congressional Gold Medal; they have been forever memorialized in the Marine Corps Hymn Lyrics "... *To the shores of Tripoli.*" Perhaps most significant was the fact that Commodore Preble acted as Commanding officer and role model for Junior Officers Stephen Decatur, William Bainbridge, Charles Stewart, Isaac Hull, and David Porter, all of who were to later have a significant historical role in US Naval history during the War of 1812 with the British. Decatur, Bainbridge, Stewart, and Hull would join Preble in perpetuity as the next generation of US Congressional Gold Medal awardees for their bravery in naval battles.

The medal is definitely unusual in that it has a gilt finish, which is worn through and bleeding in spots. A gilt NA-3 is unusual and uncommon, but not unreported; Rich Hartzog lists two known auction records in his 1986 Price Guide for US Mint Medals, presumably from Carl Carlson's tabulations.

The atypical gilt finish is only one of a handful of unusual characteristics seen on this medal. To my knowledge, all Preble medals struck with the original dies measuring somewhere between 63-65 mm in diameter.

While measuring the medal, I was shocked to discover that the medal is larger, and actually measures *68.5 mm in diameter!* While the extra four or five additional millimeters in diameter may not seem significant, it actually represents an almost 13% greater area than the smaller version of the NA-3. It may be noteworthy that the difference also represents an incrementally 1/16-inch larger diameter than the regular Preble medal. I searched, but was unable to locate any record or reference for this larger 68.5 mm version of the medal. Curious as to the history of the medal, I contacted both Joe Levine and D. Wayne Johnson to determine if they had ever seen or heard of a Preble medal of this larger

diameter. I was not surprised to learn that neither had ever encountered this larger diameter Preble medal in their many years of experience in working with historic medals.

In order to take a more detailed look at any variance on Preble medal diameters, I took a sampling of the diameters of medals in known collections and from various auction records. All of the medals in the examples listed here were struck with original dies, though some were of the later striking, exhibiting a telltale die-break on the reverse rim.

Here is a listing of a large sampling of Preble Medals with their composition/finish, and indicated diameters:

KDM Collection (pictured here) AE 65 mm
Massachusetts Historical Society AE 65 mm
New York Historical Society AE 65 mm
New York Historical Society AE 64 mm
New York Historical Society AE 63 mm
New York Historical Society Electrotpe 64 mm
National Maritime Museum AE 65 mm
(Greenwich England)
American Numismatic Society AE 65 mm
American Numismatic Society AE 65 mm
American Numismatic Society AE 65 mm

I also located the following auction records and listed diameters:

Stacks John J. Ford Part II (2004) AR shells 64.8 mm
Stacks John J. Ford Part II AE 64.3 mm
Stacks John J. Ford Part II AE 64.1 mm
Bowers/PCAC Dreyfuss (1986) AE Silvered 64 mm
Bowers/PCAC Dreyfuss AE 64 mm
PCAC # 41 (1986) AE Silvered 64 mm
PCAC # 49 (1990) AE 64.75 mm
PCAC # 50 (1991) AE 64.3 mm
PCAC # 68 (2000) AE 64.3 mm

While this list could contain one or two of the same specimens that have sold more than once, this representative sampling of 19 medals struck with original dies all show diameters between 63-65 mm. The US Mint later made copy dies of the Preble medal in 1884, which bear the added reverse inscription "REPRODUCTION 1884". PCAC has listed a number of these 1884 copies at auction, all of which are described as having 64-65 mm diameters.

The gilt Preble medal weighs 88.9 grams = 1371 grains. The medal was struck on a relatively thin flan, at least compared to most original Preble medals. The rims are thin; perhaps 3.0-3.3 mm wide, while bronzed-copper originals usually have rims closer to 4 mm in width. The weight is approximately the same as other "normal" sized copper Preble medals, at least based upon the examples that were in the John J. Ford collection.

The oversized gilt Preble medal is definitely not a cast or electrotpe copy. The medal is struck, and when given the important "ring test" to test for a solid struck composition, it rings with a sustained high-pitched tone I would usually associate with a solid silver medal (as opposed to a bronzed-copper composition). Joe Levine revealed to me that a gilt finish on a medal may alter the tone somewhat, so in this case the tone and resonance of the medal may not be an accurate indicator of the underlying composition.

Hartzog indicates that one of the Preble gilt finish medals may have been of silver composition. Of course, as the owner of the medal I had originally (and optimistically) hoped this medal had an underlying silver composition, but the weight is more consistent with a copper composition. The medal has a number of small areas where the gilding has worn through (called "bleeding") to reveal the underlying medal. I made enlarged scans of the areas of bleeding, and in those images the bleeding appears to be of a copper hue. With the naked eye, however, it is very difficult to

determine the exposed color and the bleeding actually looks more like silver than copper, even under magnification.

In order to determine whether this larger diameter gilt medal represents an entirely different die design from the original Preble medal, I made composite scans of both this medal and a standard diameter copper Preble medal struck with original dies. I first reduced the size of this medal to the same size as the scan of the smaller diameter copper Preble medal. With both medals the same size, I created comparative digital overlays of various sections of the two medals. When compared directly in this manner, the details on the larger diameter gilt medal would consistently match the relative positioning and die characteristics of the smaller medal and therefore the original dies used to strike the smaller Preble medal.

I did not compare every single detail, which is virtually impossible on this complex medal, but in addition to the visual comparisons, I made note of, and compared certain specific die characteristics from the original dies. An example of this is in the reverse lettering, where original Preble medals have a notable gap between the two letters "M" of COMMERCII, a weakness in the striking in the letters "ANI" of AMERICANI and the second "N" in VINDICI; and also a low second "C" in COMERCII. This larger diameter gilt medal shares all of these telltale die characteristics, and many others. I spent several hours comparing two medals, and could not locate any differences.

The existence of this medal is proof that at one point there must have been a larger set of Preble medal dies. Exactly how did this medal come about? Where are those dies? Were other medals struck from this larger die? If struck from a different set of larger dies, why do the designs seem to exactly match the design from the original smaller dies used to strike the original Preble medals?

Perhaps the larger dies were cut from the same master die of the smaller medals or a

galvano or plaster of the original Preble medal using a die-engraving pantograph. This may explain the matching die characteristics. [DELETE D. Wayne] Dick Johnson, however, felt that it would be difficult to cut a die that was only 4mm larger by using an existing 64mm medal or a master die as a pattern. Further, the U.S. Mint Contamin die-engraving pantograph was not obtained until 1836, the only known pantograph which could have done this in America after that time.

He suggested this medal might represent a striking from a very accurately cut hand-engraved die of a larger diameter. In this writer's opinion, despite the extraordinary skills of the engraver of this medal, John Reich, there are far too many matching details between this medal and the smaller medals for this to have been a separately hand engraved die.

John W. Adams has come up with the suggestion that a pantograph was somehow used to create a larger die by enlarging the original die by one-fourth and subsequently reducing the size by one-fourth (or visa versa). This would net the difference in size between the dies of one-sixteenth, and seems to be a reasonable explanation for the existence of this larger struck medal and the dies used to strike the medal. This may place the striking of the medal to sometime after 1836, or the medal could have been manufactured overseas from a transfer die made by an original medal.

Somewhere along the line, in the process of my investigation of this medal, it struck me that I conceivably may never have discovered the larger diameter of this medal. I am usually researching various pieces in my collection and do at times make measurements, but not always. While the difference in size is obvious when comparing the larger medal directly against a standard diameter Preble medal, with just the medal in hand you are not likely to notice the larger diameter, and it seems to be of the correct size.

I would appreciate it if any MCA members who have a 19th century strike Preble medal in their collection could take a closer look, check the diameters of their medals, and let me know their findings. I will put together a census of the medals and their diameters, and report this information back to the MCA Advisory. Most important, if you discover that you also have a Preble medal struck from the larger dies please let me know. Any information should be forwarded to me at tonycharl@comcast.net.

A closer look at the history of this medal may shed some light on this investigation.

Commodore Preble was personally and actively involved in the creation of his Congressional gold medal from the beginning. He was in Washington on March 3, 1805 when the Congressional Resolution was passed awarding him the gold medal. The bust of Preble on the obverse of the medal was taken from a portrait drawn for that purpose by the famous American neoclassical portrait painter Rembrandt Peale only two weeks after the Resolution passed. Preble had personally sat for the Peale portrait used on the medal. The naval battle scene on the reverse of the medal was designed based upon drawings made personally by Commodore Preble himself.

Preble had originally asked that his Congressional gold medal be struck in a large size, with a diameter of 4 inches. Considering the fact that George Washington had received a Congressional gold medal measuring only 3 inches in diameter, and the gold Congressional "Comitia Americana" medals awarded to Revolutionary War Generals Daniel Morgan, Anthony Wayne, Horatio Gates, and Nathaniel Green were less than 2 1/2 inches in diameter, it was determined appropriate to strike a medal for Commodore Preble which was 2 1/2 inches in diameter. Actually, it is questionable whether the screw presses then in use could have struck a solid 4-inch medal in this high

relief and detail, and this was another reason for the decision to strike the smaller medal. Could this medal represent a strike from a larger set of dies used to originally strike the Preble medals that eventually failed? Perhaps Preble was mollified by striking him a Gold medal that was slightly larger, one-sixteenth larger in this case, than the 2 1/2 inch medal that he was to be awarded. Could the original Gold medal have been struck with these larger dies?

I contacted Jim Cheevers, Curator of the US Naval Academy Museum at Annapolis, and he was gracious enough to measure the diameter of the actual original gold medal awarded to Commodore Preble, which is on display there. The original Commodore Preble gold medal in the US Navy collection measures 64.389 mm in diameter, and is consistent with the diameter of the other original Preble medal strikes I have noted.

The original Gold medal would have been one of the first medals struck with the set of both dies. While the original gold medal being of the larger size, 200 years later this alone does not completely condemn my theory about the larger dies made for Preble. There are other possibilities that must be considered. Perhaps my conjecture is accurate, and it was the original intention to strike a larger medal. This medal was an early copper or silver strike, struck with gold gilt in order to check the look of the design in it's intended gold composition, and the dies subsequently failed before striking the actual gold medal.

Another possibility is that the original dies were these larger dies; originally engraved in the wrong size. This medal, and possibly others were struck, and the larger dies may have failed, or it may have been discovered that the dies were oversized, and the dies were discarded, with this medal remaining from the scrap heap.

On closer examination, the larger size diameter is only one of a handful of unusual and dramatic characteristic which are present

on this medal. The medal is an “error” strike, and very obviously triple struck...at least triple struck...within the medal’s rim. The second strike can be easily seen in **the** exergue, and is rotated counter-clockwise 10-15 degrees. The third strike is level with the first, and to the right of the first. Closer examination shows many misplaced letters in exergue which are not accounted for in these three obvious strikes.

In addition to the multiple obvious out of center strikes seen in exergue, the medal also displays an underlying reverse exergual line on the obverse, which matches the exergual line on the reverse.. There is also a matching “bulge” on the reverse seen under the ships detail which is likely an underlying raised area from the obverse bust of Preble, this is called “ghosting” in die-striking terminology. It is obvious that this is yet another strike from the press, obverse on reverse, reverse on obverse, which would be described by coin error collectors as a “flipover” strike.

The author’s initial viewpoint of this attribute of the medal as simply a major mint error is lacking, and does not take into account all of the complexities of the medal making processes during the late 18th and early 19th century. Once again, I will call upon [D. Wayne] Dick Johnson’s profound knowledge, experience, and understanding of the history and technology of medal manufacturing. Johnson’s explanation for this dramatic multiple strike was:

"This is not surprising. A medal of this size would have been multiple struck to raise all the modulated relief. What it does prove is that it was not struck in a collar but was struck with open face dies. These rotated between blows. The medals would be "work hardened" and would have to be annealed or softened before going back on the press. Seating the medal for a subsequent blow was critical and obviously not done in this case. The British call open face dies "box dies." But it was really the French who first used open

face dies. If these were made in England it was probably at a later period"

The fact that this medal was not seated for subsequent blows may indicate that the dies or the press were being tested, and that the outcome of the actual medal being struck was not critical. By the way, Johnson's reference to England takes into account Julian’s notation, which he basically dismisses, that the NA-3 Preble medal may have been struck in England, and not at the US Mint.

In addition to the 4 obvious blows from the striking press seen by the flip-over strike, and the 3 strikes seen in exergue, I was curious as to the total number of strikes required to account for this ultimately fully struck up medal. Once again, I referred to [DELETE D. Wayne] Dick Johnson asking for his opinion as to the number of strikes needed to create this medal. Much of his expert and informative reply is worthy of quoting here, especially in that it establishes important terminology related to medal making during this period:

“There is no fixed rule on the number of strikes for any medal. There are so many factors involved --pressure of the press, hardness of the metal blank, height of relief in the die, thickness of the blank -- are the most important factors in order. A pressman will keep striking a medal until he brings up all the relief in the die.”

“But you must realize with each blow it **work hardens** the struck metal. After perhaps two or three blows any further striking would not move any more surface metal. Striking freezes the molecules in a fixed position. The partially struck medal must be **relieved** by **heat treating** -- this allows the molecules in the metal to break that fixed position, to be able to move around again. This is called **annealing**.”

“Iron has the amazing property, when heated and with slow cooling, it **reduces** the hardness. Heating and rapid cooling (like immersion into water or molten salt) **hardness** the iron and is called **quenching**. For this reason dies are always made of

iron. Items struck in metal have similar but different properties. Medals in bronze or silver, the most common composition, are *relieved* in a similar heating and slow cooling manner.”

“The relieved medal must be placed back on the press. It must *seat* in the exact position of the previous blows, the surface relief must line up exactly. For this reason a pressman will usually place the die with the side of greatest relief -- usually the obverse with a portrait -- in the lower position in the press to aid in seating the medal back in the press to be struck again.”

between strikes for either press.”

“What press the medal maker will use depends upon what press he has, or what press is available when the medal needs to be struck. Once a medal die is made it can be used for either press. You cannot tell by inspecting a struck piece whether it was struck on a knuckle-joint press or a hydraulic press.”

“Medal presses use only *open face dies*, called *box dies* in England. They are more suitable for large medals. (Dies for coining presses are different -- not only does a coin die have to be made to fit within its collar it must be compatible with the housing of the press where the die is locked in position.) Generally, open face medal dies can strike any size up to 6-inch diameter. Generally, coining dies can strike up to 2-inch diameter. However, in recent times the industry has been pushing these limits upwards for both methods”

“Your medal, made in 1806, was struck on a screw press. All the conditions described above apply to items struck on a screw press. The major difference: the screw press was powered by man (horse, or water power). Modern presses are powered by electricity of course (since 1890).”

One possibility, which cannot be completely ruled out, is that the early 19th century US Mint employees or others struck the medal in this fashion as some sort of whimsical

folly, often referred to as “mint sport”. It would not be the only case in history where this has occurred; consider the 21st century discovery of the Sacagawea Dollar/Washington Quarter mules!

At this point in the discussion, given all of these unusual characteristics, and all of the conjecture about this medal and its purpose, it is important to reconsider the paradoxical gilding on the medal.

Much of the discussion here places the larger dies as having been contemporary with the smaller dies, and again it is also possible the smaller dies were created subsequent to the larger dies. An issue arises in that this large medal has a gilt finish, and a fairly thick one at that. According to Dick Johnson, “Gold plating was not invented until the 1840s (and the firegilding used prior to that would not give the thick gilding you say the medal has),”

The original Preble medal dies were originally lost sometime after 1820, and were not located again until they were located by numismatic researcher and author J.F. Loubat being used as paperweights by the Navy Department in early 1872. During this 50 year period, the US Mint apparently did not have any Preble dies, and could not make restrikes for medal collectors, despite the fact that medal collecting was popular. This demand for collector copies of US Mint medals in the 19th century was met by the US Mint by making collector restrikes of the Naval and other military medals awarded by Congress, often struck with the actual original dies.

This period also falls into the time frame given by Johnson for the US Mint to have access to the new technology of gold plating that appears to have been used to apply the heavy gilt on this medal. Also, the arrival of a die engraving pantograph at the US mint coincides with this period.

Given the fact that the US Mint had no other dies to strike a Preble medal, and also the fact that the medal is gilded with a technology discovered during this era, it may seem logical

that in the US mint did create a set of larger Preble dies during this period to make collector restrikes, and in the case of this medal, applied a thick gold plating. Since the US Mint also had a die-engraving pantograph to create a larger die from a master hub or die, they may have used it to create a larger die from an actual medal.

While many of the issues seem to be resolved by placing this medal and these larger dies in this era, many are not and thus the paradox. Mint records were more accurate during this time than during the early 19th century, and there is no documented record of a larger set of Preble dies being produced. An 1855 survey of the dies being held by the US Mint states that the Preble dies are missing. It is very difficult to believe, and highly unlikely, that a larger set of Preble dies were produced, and were undocumented, and also managed to go missing along with the original dies by 1855. Also, where are all of the other larger medals? While the census requested here may uncover other examples of the 68 mm medals, at the present time, this one is unique, there are no others known. I suspect there are few other examples, if any are found at all.

Taking into account all of the various unusual characteristics of this medal, the historical timeframe creates a multitude of unexplainable issues. Considering everything discussed thus far, the method of striking seems to be that this medal was struck from a larger set of previously unknown dies on a screw press sometime during 1805-1806, but the issue of this matching larger die and the gilding seem to place the production of the medal to sometime around 1840.

Could this have been an earlier strike which as later gilded? A careful examination of the medal, easily disputes this possibility. The lettering and designs on the medal are far too sharp for the medal to have been struck then later gilded. A subsequent gilt finish applied after striking coats and effectively dulls the sharp features of the medal, and the thick

gilding seen on this medal would have caused a profound reduction in detail. That is simply not the case with this medal, where the sharpness can only be explained if the gilt was applied either prior to, or during the striking. In fact, on close examination there are areas of this medal where the strike actually has greater detail and sharpness than an original copper strike.

How can a medal have a history, striking method and sharpness which places its manufacture during 1805-1806, and yet has a gilt finish that uses a technology developed over 30 years later? Time machines notwithstanding, I do not have an answer.

As an aside, it is important to state that his medal is definitely not a modern 20th century restrike that has been tampered with. Unfortunately, with all of the manipulated and tampered modern restrikes of 20th century Indian Peace Medals on eBay, any discussion of new US Mint medal discoveries must take this possibility into account.

Twentieth century restrikes of the Preble medal are easily distinguishable from original strikes by the configuration of the lettering in exergue. On originals, the first letter "I" in TRIPOLI is almost vertically aligned with the "I" in the Roman numeral date below. On 20th century restrikes, the 2 letters are not vertically aligned, with the "I" in the Roman numeral date being far to the right of the "I" in TRIPOLI. The plate example pictured in Julian is a 20th century restrike (because the medals were furnished by Chet Krause who had obtained them from the U.S. Mint prior). Compare the lettering there with the [3] **three** originals listed in the Stack's John J. Ford sale, Part V, Lots 164-166. The large gilt Preble medal matches the alignment of the original medals.

There still remains one final unusual characteristic of this medal. The medal very likely had a hanger attached at 12:00 at some point. The hanger is absent, but here is a solder remnant along the rim there, and at the same

location a small portion the gilt finish is missing. Taking into account the fact that at some point this medal had a hanger attached for suspension, we should take a closer look at the wear patterns and resultant bleeding to see if it reveals anything. The wear on the medal is greater on the reverse than on the obverse, and consistent with a medal that once had a hanger for suspension, and was actually worn or displayed in this manner.

From my viewpoint, the historic significance of any relic, be it a coin, collectible, antique, piece of artwork, or in this case a historic medal, far outweighs the importance of the rarity, demand, or market value of the item. There are many elements that go into determining the “intrinsic” value of an item, and none is of greater value than historic significance.

Keeping this in mind, historically, the hanger could be the single most significant characteristic of the medal, and a key to coming up with an answer to this puzzle.

Could Commodore Preble have privately contracted for a larger second “faux” gold medal created with a different composition, and from a second set of dies? He could safely wear the medal without fear of it being stolen, and it would be of the larger size which was satisfactory for him. If many layers of gold leaf were repeatedly applied during multiple strikes with a screw press, this could produce a medal with the heavy gilt and sharp details seen on this medal.

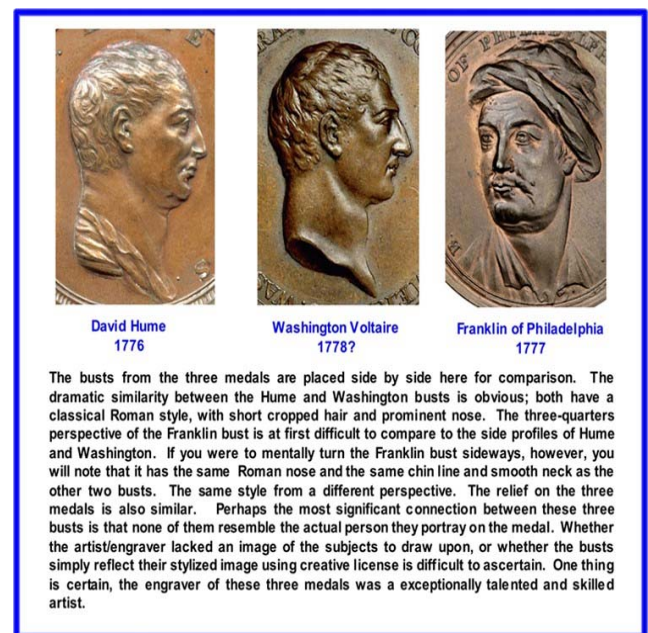
This scenario could account for all of the unusual characteristics of this medal, and also the technologies available at the time. It also explains the possible purpose of the medal, which is commonly overlooked, and is the most difficult and yet most necessary to determine.

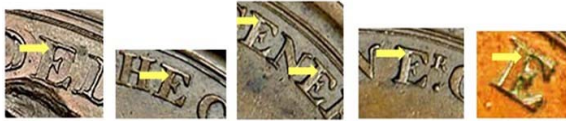
Undoubtedly Commodore Preble would have more reason to wear this medal than anyone else. While I may not have solved, and may never solve all of the mysteries and questions surrounding this medal, the fact that this medal exists gives us the rare opportunity

to research and ask questions we would have never have otherwise considered, including suggesting it may have been possessed and worn by Commodore Preble personally.

According to Julian, the original striking of the Preble medal took place in 1806. On May 17, 1806, Commodore Edward Preble was sent and subsequently received his original gold medal. On August 25, 1807, a little over one year later, Commodore Preble passed away. He leaves us with a little known bit crucial legacy to the security and Naval defense of a young nation, a legacy which lives on in the beautiful design of this enigmatic medal.

After more than 200 years of history, the one thing we do know for certain is that the secret history surrounding the creation and use of this unique medal will never be completely unraveled. ☼





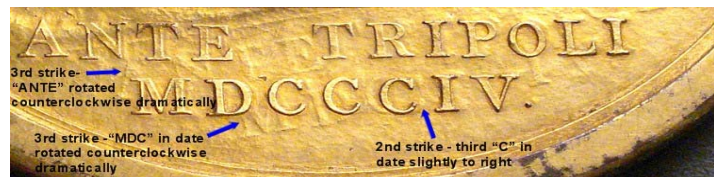
PHILADELPHIA (1777 Franklin) **THE** (Wash Voltaire) **GENERAL** (Wash Voltaire) **Er** (Wash Voltaire) **HUM E** (David Hume)

Above The obverse dies of the 1777 Franklin, Washington Voltaire, and David Hume medal all have a matching flaw or chip seen on the upper right inside of the thicker vertical upright portion of the capital letter "E". This matching flaw is significant and can only be attributed to this letter on the dies being accomplished with the same identical punch. This should be definitive evidence that all three medals came from the same source.

Below The unusual font of the capital letter "N" seen on the obverse and reverse of the 1777 Franklin and obverse of the Washington Voltaire medals matches in style. Note that the upper right serif rises upwards at a similar angle, and other details match. While this does not show the exact same punches, it indicates that they are from the same style of letter punches. (Hume medal does not have the letter "N")



FRANKLIN (1777 Franklin) Obverse **FULMINA** (1777 Franklin) Reverse **WASHINGTON** (Wash Voltaire) **CONTINEN** (Wash Voltaire)







Two Henry Clay Medalets from the Presidential Election Of 1844

(Harry E. Salyards)

The recent purchase of two Henry Clay medals has renewed an old interest of mine in the man and his political career. For, after several times as the “bridesmaid,” 1844 was *supposed* to be the year he was finally elected President. “Justice to Henry Clay” was the

watchword, as he came out of semi-retirement to head the Whig ticket. In 1840, he’d foregone a potential candidacy in favor of William Henry Harrison, and with Harrison’s election, he felt his policies finally would be advanced, after the ‘dark’ years of the Jackson/Van Buren administrations.

Put in simplest terms, the two major parties occupied essentially opposite positions from those they hold today. The Democrats of Jackson, Van Buren, et al were in favor of ‘hard money’/local control/free trade, while the Whigs of Henry Clay were in favor of “Internal Improvements” (translation: Federal involvement in canals, roads, etc.), and a Protectionist tariff (to shelter American industry). These themes are reflected in the images on these medals.

In researching these pieces, I dug out my copy of Edmund B. Sullivan’s *American Political Badges and Medalets, 1789-1892* (Lawrence, MA: Quarterman, 1981), a revision of an earlier work by DeWitt (whose extensive collection of these political memorabilia is now housed in a museum at the University of Hartford). In that reference, I discovered, in the sheer number of varieties produced, how overwhelmingly certain Clay’s election must have seemed: 71 varieties altogether, versus 11 for his Democratic opponent, James Knox Polk. This number also overwhelms the varieties struck for other Presidential elections in which Clay was a candidate: 1832 (4) and 1836 (2). I also discovered Satterlee numbers, which led me down some intriguing byways in Nineteenth Century American numismatic literature.

Alfred H. Satterlee privately published *An Arrangement of Medals and Tokens, Struck in Honor of the Presidents of the United States, and of the Presidential Candidates* in New York in 1862. In it, my larger diameter medal (DeWitt/Sullivan HC 1844-1) is described and given the number 123. In his “Notes” section, on page 82, #123 is valued as follows: “Levick, \$1.70, Cogan, Oct. 1860, \$1.50.” Obviously,

prices have advanced somewhat since that time—though \$1.70 was no trifling sum, if one compares it to the prices being paid for certain United States Large Cents in that era! My small diameter medal (DeWitt/Sullivan HC 1844-6) was priced as follows: “Levick \$1.05, Cogan, Oct. 1860, 85 [cents], Prime’s dup. 60 [cents], Boston, April 1861, 75 [cents].”

“Prime’s dup.”?—that would of course be W. C. Prime (of *Coins, Medals, & Seals, Ancient and Modern* (New York: Harper’s, 1861). And indeed, on page 252 of that volume, one finds the two Clay medals again listed, as #5 (DeWitt/Sullivan HC 1844-6), at \$1.05; and #6 (DeWitt/Sullivan HC 1844 HC-1), at \$1.70. Obviously, these must be the Levick prices.

These medals are *incredibly* hefty items, for one mostly used to handling low-relief *coins*. 1844 HC-1 measures in at 51 mm. diameter, 5.22 mm. thick at the rim, and 8.33 mm. thick (!) at the high point of Clay’s portrait. It weighs 75.80 grams—more than the weight of two double eagles! 1844 HC-6 measures 41.63 mm. in diameter, 5.22 mm. thick at the rim, and 6.25 mm. thick at the high point of Clay’s portrait. It tops the scale at 45.94 grams. As you can see from the photos, each is very nicely preserved.

But they have their melancholy side, too—in that Henry Clay was *not* elected President in 1844. A marginal third-party candidate siphoning off a handful of votes here and there; a bit of voter fraud (*does this start to sound familiar?*), in this case primarily in New York; and a good deal of agitation over the question of the admission of Texas as one (or more) slave state(s), and James Knox Polk became the first true ‘Dark Horse’ candidate to be elected President.

And one more melancholy note, in closing. The complete text of Satterlee’s 1862 volume is available for free on Google. Whereas Sullivan’s 1981 volume is out of print and selling for \$500 and up on several on-line sites. Somehow, that’s not how it’s *supposed*

to be. We expect (sometimes regretfully) the cost of our coins and medals to go up. But *Information* is supposed to be the Name of the Age! How do we disseminate the information that it takes to collect a series if it costs 500 bucks just to get the basic reference? In my opinion, the Sullivan volume is one that is in desperate need of reprinting!





New York International Numismatic Convention

12 January 2008

ALL PHOTOS COPYRIGHT ©2008 BY
ROBERT F. FRITSCH; PO BOX 3003;
NASHUA, NH 03061-3003 (unless otherwise
noted). Email: bobfritsch@earthlink.net

The photos on this disk were taken by
Bob Fritsch on 12 August at NYINC. The
machine used was an Nikon Coolpix L12
digital camera. Photo credits for any picture
are "Photo by Robert F. Fritsch", or alternately
"Photo by Bob Fritsch" unless otherwise noted.

Each Image has two files, the original
file as it came out of the camera which is about
2M, and the "processed" file that is about
200K. The processed files have been run
through the photo enhancer and are designated
by an "s" after the image number. Otherwise,
the images bearing the same numbers are the
same.

Bob Fritsch
30 January 2008



Audience



Audience



Gerard Muhl



Ira Rezak



Joyce and Ben Weiss



David Menchell



Audience

Letters to the Editor

John - back in 1969 I purchased from Charles McSorley a medal that he described as being related to the defeat of the Spanish at Cartagena, 1739-41. He was not able to give me any further information on it.

Thought I would send you photos of the medal and ask, if you have ever seen one or can confirm that it is (or is not) related to Vernon. It is about 1" diameter. The portrait side reads: Lvdovicvs /Magnvs / Rex. Below the bust is N. The back side reads: Omen / Imperi / Maritimi. At the bottom left are 5 ships. To the right side are water lines and perhaps (?) buildings.



Meg and John Sallay

Warren Lloyd



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Date:
Name:
Mailing Address:
Street:
City:State:Zip code:
Telephone (Work):(Home):
Email:

QUESTIONNAIRE

How did you learn about the MCA?

What are your collecting interests?

What would you see highlighted in MCA publications?

For volunteers: I am willing to devote time to the following MCA projects:

DUES: \$20.00 PER CALENDAR YEAR (Includes a subscription to monthly publications of the MCA advisory)

Please send completed application and payment to:

Medal Collectors of America
c/o Barry Tayman
3115 Nestling Pine Court
Ellicott City, MD 21042

Or email completed form to: bdtayman@verizon.net
MCA WEBSITE: <http://www.medalcollectors.org>